

# Learning to Teach, Imaginatively: Supporting the Development of New Teachers Through Cognitive Tools

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## What is Imaginative Education?

It is a new theory and practices that engage teachers' and learners' imaginations in seeing the rich meaning of curriculum content to increase the effectiveness of everyday education (Egan, 1997).

The theory details the cognitive tools we use to make sense of the world via our bodies (e.g., senses, emotions), oral language (e.g., stories, metaphors), literacy (e.g., extremes and limits, heroes), theoretical language (e.g. agency, making connections), and highly reflexive language (e.g., awareness and recognition of complexity; (Egan et al., 2016).

## Existing Teacher Education Programs in Canada

One of the main concerns with the current system in Canada pertains to the fact that the majority of teacher education programs are designed to emphasize teacher candidates gaining theoretical knowledge prior to gaining field experience (as cited in Egan et al., 2016).

### Why is this of concern?

Professional or more applied knowledge is learned through reflection AND by directly engaging in learning environments (as cited in Egan et al., 2016).

Unlike many other professions, teacher candidates have their own ideas about how to change the education system (Sarason, 1996). Teacher candidates have had the chance to be a part of the education system for many years as learners, and have observed teaching practices (Egan et al., 2016).



Link to Article:

<http://mje.mcgill.ca/article/view/9317/7161>

Teacher candidates expressed that the practicum was the most helpful aspect of teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). The value of this experience depended largely on the relationship with their supervisor (Bullock, 2016).

## Improving Teacher Education Programs

Numerous ideas, such as eportfolios, have been explored to help teacher candidates integrate the knowledge they have learned throughout their education with their teaching practice (Hopper & Sanford, 2010). Egan and colleagues (2016) have proposed a new method of enhancing teacher education programs: introducing and demonstrating the everyday effectiveness of **Imaginative Education**.

## Learning in Depth Program (LiD)

LiD was invented by the Imaginative Education Research Group, and started in British Columbia in 2008/9. It has since spread to other classrooms across Canada and to more than 20 other countries. The aim of the program is to make sure that all students become experts in some area of knowledge. In becoming experts, it is easier for students to be imaginative (Egan et al., 2016)

“... [I]maginative education ... uses feelings and images, metaphors and jokes, rhyme and rhythm, stories and wonder, heroes and the exotic, hopes, fears, and passions, hobbies and collecting, and much else in engaging the imaginations of both teachers and learners.”  
(Egan, 1997)

## How can we Incorporate Imaginative Education?

The following ideas for reform have been proposed by Egan and colleagues (2016):

- Teacher candidates learn about the nature and uses of various cognitive tools
- Practice planning using the Imaginative Education frameworks
- Practice use of cognitive tools in their practicum
- Explore the possibilities of new programs like LiD
- Reciprocal relationship between teacher candidates and cooperating teachers

### References

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